

Surface Force Strategy

Return to Sea Control



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We are entering a new age of Seapower.

A quarter-century of global maritime dominance by the U.S. Navy is being tested by the return of great power dynamics. The security interests of the United States and those of our allies are increasingly challenged by near-peer competitors, confrontational foreign governments, and well-armed, non-state militant groups. Our Navy must adjust to the changing security environment. We are driven by the challenges of these state and non-state actors, who may not be as devoted to the rules-based system of international norms that have shaped our world for the last 70 years. History teaches us the dangers to a maritime nation's security and prosperity when its navy fails to adapt to the challenges of a changing security environment. From Europe to Asia, history is replete with nations that rose to global power only to cede it back through lack of seapower, either over time or in decisive battle.

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As today's leading naval power, we cannot afford to lose our Nation's seapower edge. The U.S. Navy is responding to global challenges under the leadership of the Chief of Naval Operations and is guided by the precepts of our "Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority." Responding to the call to "strengthen naval power at and from the sea," the U.S. Naval Surface Force submits this "Surface Force Strategy." The strategy describes the return to sea control and implementation of Distributed Lethality as an operational and organizational principle for achieving and sustaining sea control at will. Sea control is the precondition for everything else we must do as a navy. Distributed Lethality reinforces fleet initiatives that drive collaboration and integration across warfighting domains. Distributed Lethality requires increasing the offensive and defensive capability of surface forces, and guides deliberate resource investment for modernization and for the future force. Providing more capabilities across surface forces yields more options for Geographic Combatant Commanders in peace and war.

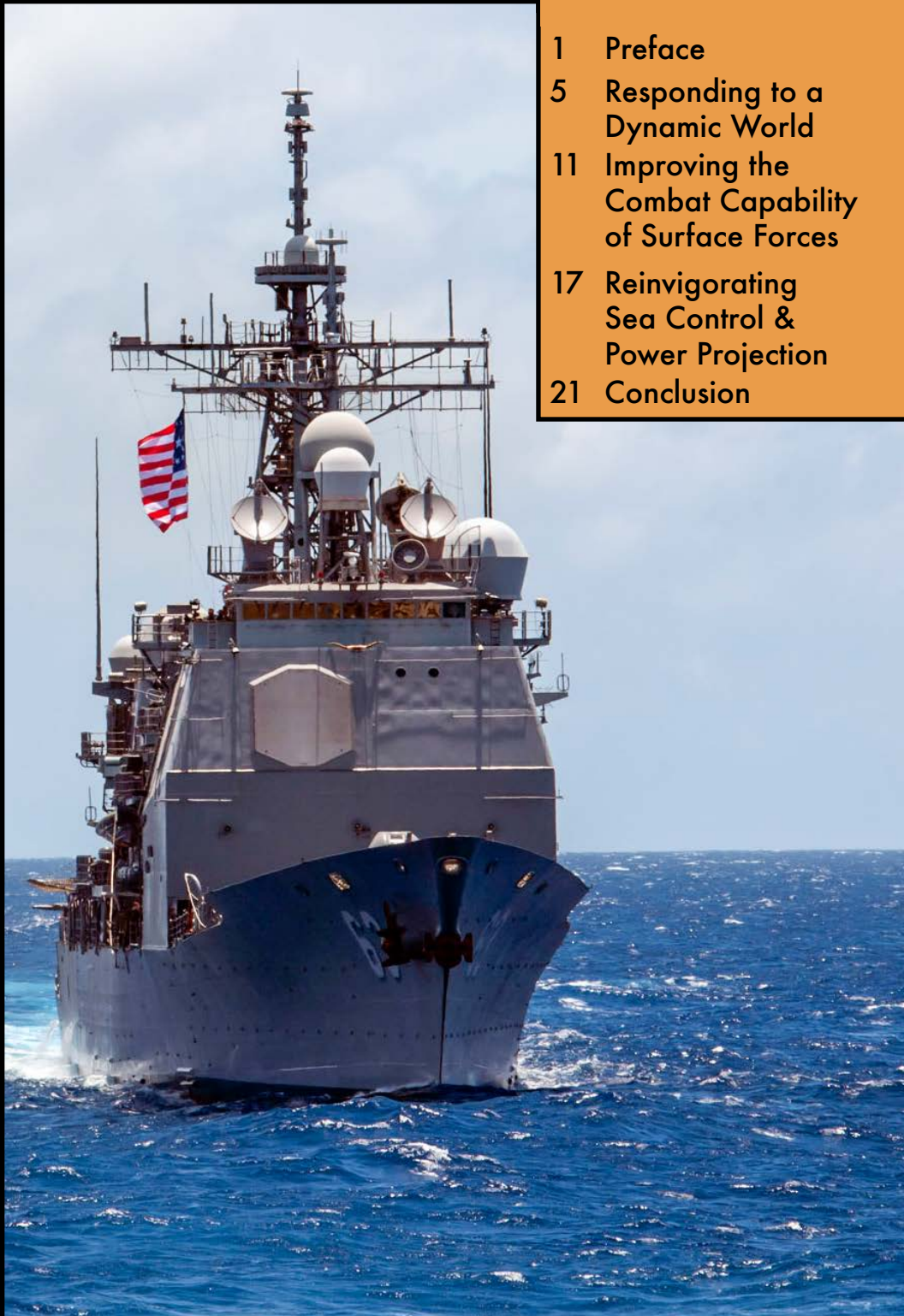
In order to achieve the desired outcome of this strategy, we must rededicate the force to attain and sustain sea control, retain the best and the brightest, develop and provide advanced tactical training, and equip our ships with improved offensive weapons, sensors, and hard kill/soft kill capabilities. Pursuing these ends will enhance our capability and capacity to go on the offensive and to defeat multiple attacks.

By providing a more powerful deterrent, we will dissuade the first act of aggression, and failing that, we will respond to an attack in kind by inflicting damage of such magnitude that it compels an adversary to cease hostilities, and render it incapable of further aggression.



T.S. Rowden

Commander, Naval Surface Force



Forward

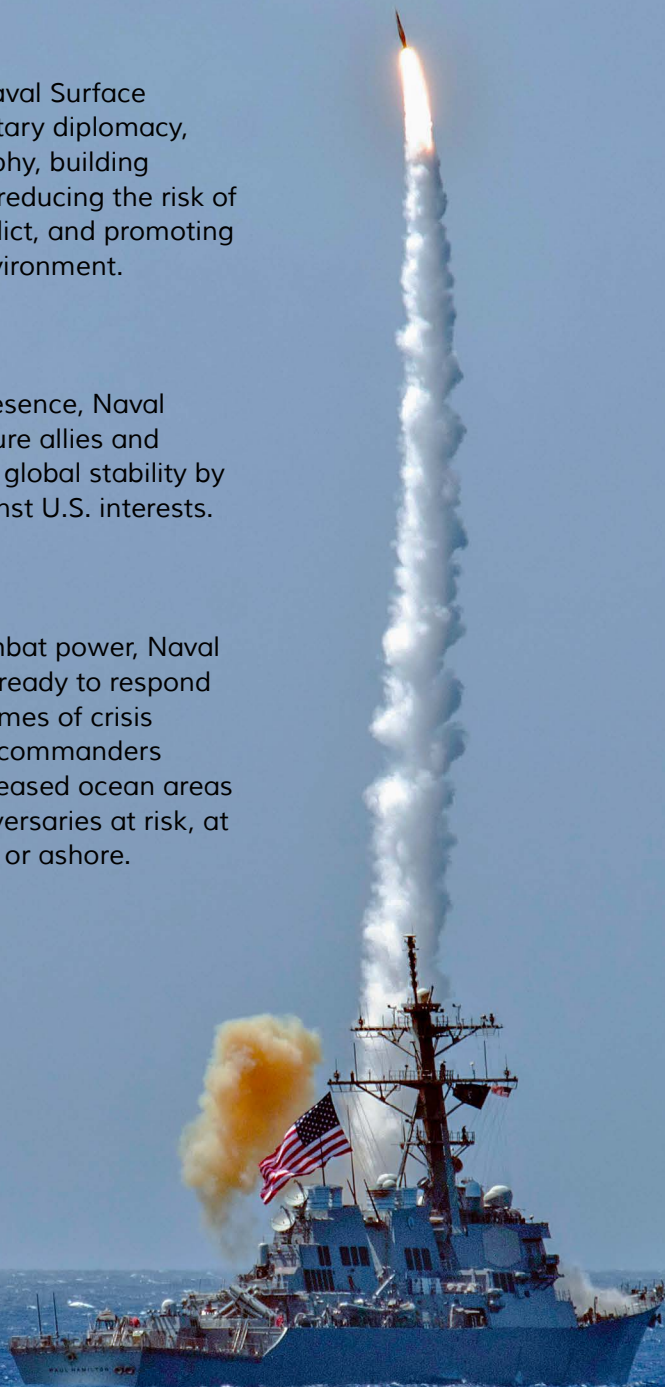
Operating forward, Naval Surface Warships execute military diplomacy, across a wide geography, building greater transparency, reducing the risk of miscalculation or conflict, and promoting a shared maritime environment.

Visible

A persistent visible presence, Naval Surface Warships assure allies and partners and promote global stability by deterring actions against U.S. interests.

Ready

Providing credible combat power, Naval Surface Warships are ready to respond when called upon in times of crisis providing operational commanders options to control increased ocean areas and hold potential adversaries at risk, at range, whether at sea or ashore.



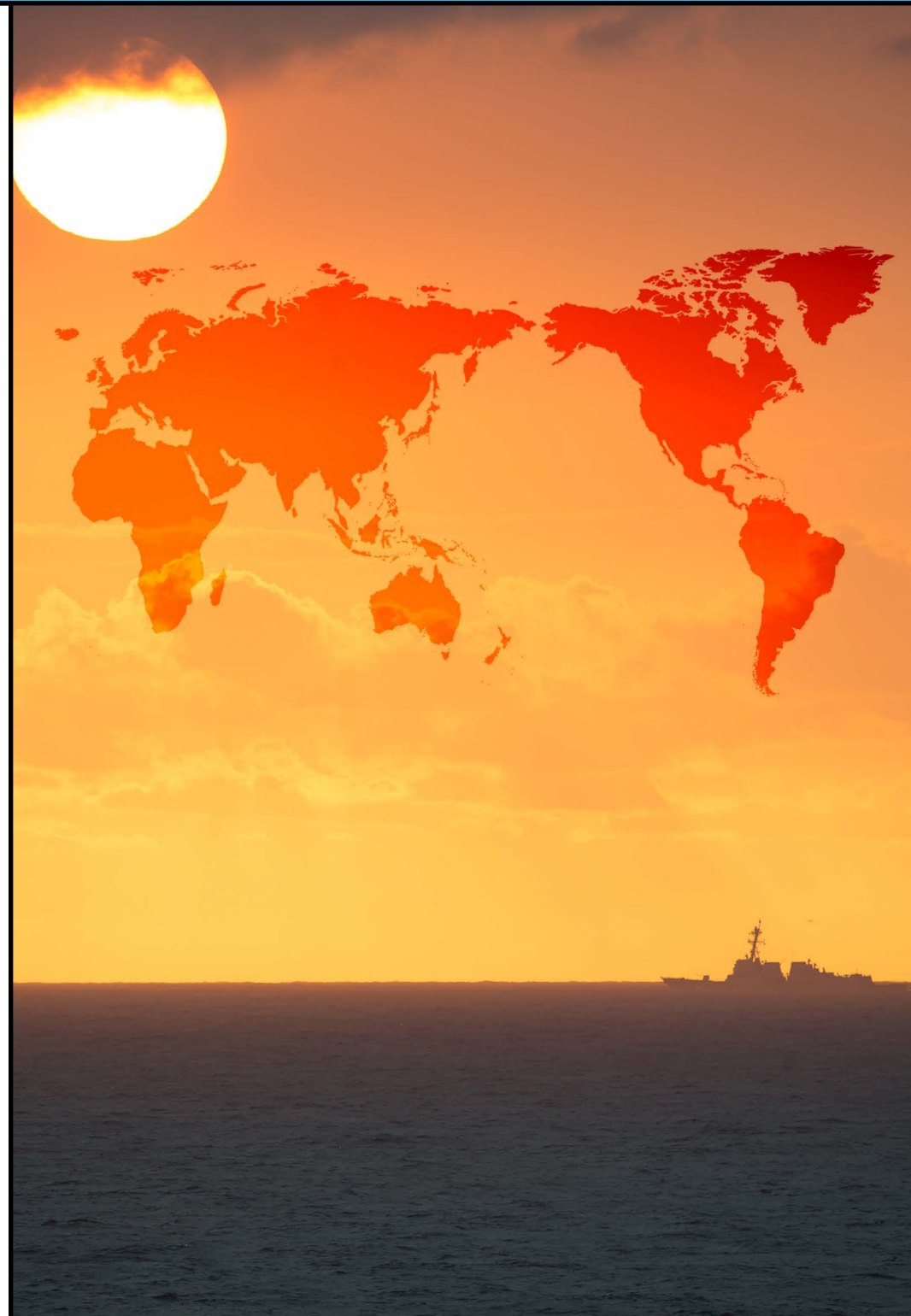
The objective of the Surface Force Strategy is to achieve and sustain sea control at the time and place of our choosing to protect the homeland from afar, build and maintain global security, project the national power of the United States, and win decisively. It is essential to our Nation's security and prosperity that we maintain the ability to maneuver globally on the seas and to prevent others from using the sea against the interests of the United States and our allies. Additionally, sea control is the pre-requisite to achieving the Navy's objectives of All Domain Access, Deterrence, Power Projection and Maritime Security.

Pressures on the Global Order

America is a maritime nation, and our prosperity is directly linked to the freedom of the seas provided by the U.S. Navy. Threats ranging from low-end piracy to well-armed non-state militant groups, to the navies of high-end nation-states pose challenges that surface forces are prepared to counter, and when called upon, defeat.

Global competitors will attempt to disrupt freedom of maneuver on the seas through the deployment and proliferation of sea denial technologies including state-of-the-art anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, integrated and layered sensor systems and targeting networks, long-range bombers, advanced fighter aircraft, submarines, mines, advanced integrated air defenses, enhanced electronic warfare, cyber and space-based technologies, and asymmetric tactics. These capabilities are designed to raise the risk to U.S. forces in order to undercut confidence among friends and allies of our ability and will to operate forward. The surface force must adapt in meaningful ways that allow for confident operations in contested environments within an acceptable level of risk. The most important challenge for the surface force to address is the improving technologies, systems, and networks our competitors put in place to deter and deny the United States access to vital sea areas. These technologies extend from the sea floor to space and present surface forces with multi-axis and multi-dimensional challenges.

Countering these advanced sea denial technologies requires improved tactics; incremental adaptations to surface force weapons, platforms and sensors; and the right talent, properly trained to operate, maintain and employ these systems. To achieve these requirements, we must think differently about how we organize, prepare, and sustain surface forces.





Distributed Lethality

The concept of Distributed Lethality enables the goal of sea control at the time and place of our choosing. It is achieved by increasing the offensive and defensive capability of individual warships, employing them in dispersed formations across a wide expanse of geography, and generating distributed fires.

Distributed Lethality has distinguishing characteristics at the tactical and operational levels. At the tactical level, it increases unit lethality and reduces the susceptibility of warships to detection and targeting. At the operational level, it employs warships as elements of offensive Adaptive Force Packages that are task oriented and capable of widely dispersed operations. Adaptive Force Packages allow operational commanders the ability to scale force capabilities depending on the level of threat. This manner of employment is designed to open battlespace and enable concealment and deception in order to inject uncertainty and complexity into an adversary's targeting.

DL is composed of three tenets

Increase the offensive lethality of all warships.

Our ships must be equipped with the tools necessary to fight and defeat highly capable adversaries. When combined with the right mix of capabilities and tactics, this concept enables a surface force that can deter an adversary with credible combat power, challenge the operating space, and gain the advantage for follow-on Joint Force operations.

Distribute offensive capability geographically.

Many strategists point to America's long operational lines as a vulnerability, but Distributed Lethality makes geography a virtue. It spreads the combat power of the Fleet, holds targets at risk from multiple attack axes, and forces adversaries to defend a greater number of targets. This challenges an adversary's decision making cycle and material investment scheme by forcing that adversary to account for lethal threats from multiple domains.

Give ships the right mix of resources to persist in a fight.

We must upgrade the defensive resilience of our warships to improve the ability to fight through attacks from space, cyber, air, surface and the undersea domains. We must capitalize on the improved mutual defense among ships through evolving networks and tactics. Lastly, we must be able to fight through battle damage and sustain operations in a degraded command and control environment.

Improving
the Combat
Capability of
Surface Forces



We will organize, train, and equip surface forces to the greatest effect by using a framework composed of four pillars: tactics, talent, tools, and training (T4). The framework is designed to enhance the capability and capacity of the surface force to achieve and maintain access across all warfighting domains. It is aligned with the Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority and reinforces all of the Design's lines of effort.

This comprehensive organizational approach combines the ways and means to deliver combat-ready warships in the near (2017-2021), mid (2022-2030), and far terms (2031-2040) in order to control the sea and project power.

T4 Organizing Surface Forces For Enhanced Combat Power

TACTICS

We must strive for tactical excellence and rededicate ourselves to provide sea control for our Nation. Under the leadership of the Naval Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center (SMWDC) we will develop and teach effective tactics that also unite thought and action to develop fast and cohesive warfighting. We will also deepen our warfighter's expertise through continual critical analysis of our tactics and ingrain warfighting and tactical prowess into daily shipboard life.

TALENT

We will harness the powerful impact of engaged leaders and remain committed to the importance of warfare tactics experts. We will manage the extraordinary talent that exists within our surface force with a view towards building depth, breadth, and experience for the future. Tomorrow's challenges demand we engage the most creative and influential minds and attract and retain the best and most qualified people.

TOOLS

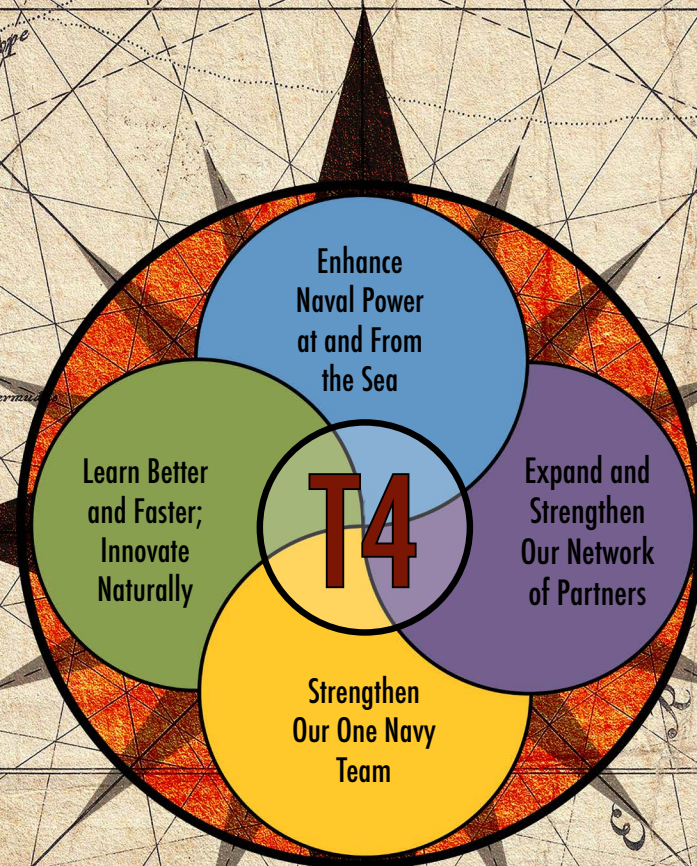
In addition to current ship construction plans, we will design, procure and build the future Fleet to raise the combat capability of surface ships. We will apply a prioritized road map to synchronize investments that adds long-range offensive weapons to our warships and increases resilience in combat.

TRAINING

We will invest in realistic and integrated training and create environments that replicate the challenges of operating and sustaining warships in complex scenarios. This will enable Sailors to gain the warfighting proficiency and confidence required to accomplish the mission during a combat encounter.

Aligning the
Surface
Community

A DESIGN FOR MAINTAINING
MARITIME SUPERIORITY





Surface Force Investment Objectives

Implementing Distributed Lethality to achieve sea control will require skillful management of the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution process. A prioritized and aligned investment plan will inform programming decisions across multiple resource sponsors. A surface force investment plan becomes even more imperative with the emerging “domain-centric” programming process. This process allocates capability and functionality across and within domains. We must work together to achieve kinetic and non-kinetic effects in the surface, undersea, air, land, cyber, and electromagnetic domains. The surface force has four investment objectives spanning the pillars of tactics, talent, tools, and training.

The first investment objective is to increase the offensive fire power of surface warships. We will continue to modify existing weapons and expand the procurement of improved surface launched anti-ship, anti-air and land-attack missiles.

These improvements are applicable to the cruiser/destroyer (CRUDES) force, littoral combat ships (LCS), and our amphibious and expeditionary forces. We will also work to expand the capability of long range anti-submarine weapons. The surface force must also continue to develop and field advanced kill chain capabilities, such as the Navy Integrated Fire Control-Counter Air (NIFC-CA), to enable sea control and defeat existing and emerging threats in all domains.

The second investment objective is to support the Navy’s long range shipbuilding plan and modernization strategy. This involves increasing advanced, integrated air and missile defense capacity through sustained modernization and new construction to achieve established force posture goals. This objective also calls for improvements to existing Air Defense Commander capabilities by extending the service life of CG 47 class ships through the cruiser modernization program. Increased LCS, frigate and amphibious ship lethality and capacity is also a cornerstone of our future success.

By 2030, littoral combat ships and frigates will represent half of deployed surface combatants. These ships must be lethal, capable, and manned appropriately. Priorities will also focus on surface and expeditionary warfare maintenance and modernization to ensure Fleet reliability, sustainability and relevancy against modern and evolving threats.

The third investment objective is to improve battlespace awareness. This objective includes continued development of combat systems capabilities with improvements to mission planning software, battle management software for Warfare Commanders, and tools to manage unit and force level emissions. The efforts in this overarching objective are also intended to capitalize on advanced Electromagnetic Maneuver Warfare (EMW) technologies, such as the Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program, designed to support a robust EMW strategy.

The fourth overarching investment objective is to implement high velocity learning across the surface force. This involves resourcing Surface and Expeditionary Warfare Training Plan continuums. This objective also includes future investments in virtual world warfighting lab venues with operator-in-the-loop and combat system test bed capabilities to provide feedback on weapon system design and develop and validate tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs).

These four investment objectives span multiple resource sponsors and several major budget accounts. Through deep partnerships, the Surface Force Strategy investment priorities build wholeness into the four pillars of tactics, talent, tools and training and make the mission capabilities within the Distributed Lethality concept a reality and, in turn, harness the full measure of combat power from the surface force.



Distributed Lethality provides an effective response to the tactical, operational, and strategic challenges posed in denied or contested environments. The operational construct to control the sea is centered on the tactical training and capabilities that allow commanders to deceive, target, and destroy an adversary. These operational functions provide Geographic Combatant Commanders options for employment of surface forces across the spectrum of conflict and serve as a foundational paradigm for our community's approach to sea control.

Forward and ready conventional surface forces must be able to deter aggression, deny aggressors the prospect of achieving their objectives, establish and maintain sea control, and project power.

Deter Aggression with Forward and Ready Conventional Forces

The ability to sustain operations far from our shores provides a distinct advantage to the United States. A persistent forward presence backed by credible combat capability can prevent aggression and limit regional crises from escalating to full-scale war.

On a daily basis, surface forces are distributed across the globe. Surface warships protect freedom of maneuver, secure the sea lanes for global trade and economic growth, defend key interests of the United States, and prevent adversaries from leveraging the world's oceans against us. Distributed Lethality gives options to Commanders to deliver credible combat power where it matters most.

A more lethal, distributed force across a greater expanse erodes an adversary's advantage by complicating their surveillance and targeting. Similarly, surface forces will have both the capability and capacity to fight through an attack while being positioned to inflict damage of such magnitude that an adversary is rendered incapable of further aggression, ceases hostilities and no longer considers force as a viable means to achieve its end-state objectives.



Deny an Aggressor Prospect of Achieving Objectives

States that leverage sea denial technologies seek to diminish the deterrent value of forward-deployed forces. This negatively impacts the assurances the United States provides to partners and allies. Distributed Lethality is an effective response to deny the prospect of any benefits sought by an adversary who chooses to leverage sea denial technologies. It also serves to influence an adversary's decision-making calculus and denies them the benefits they seek from choosing to use force on the seas as an extension of their national interests. Distributed Lethality spreads the playing field for our surface forces at sea, provides a more complex targeting problem, and creates more favorable conditions to project power where required.

Establish and Maintain Sea Control

The purpose of Distributed Lethality is to establish sea control and prevent an adversary from doing the same. The concept and organizing principles of Distributed Lethality deliver surface forces that are capable of controlling sea space at the time and place of our choosing. Surface forces outfitted with robust defensive systems and armed with credible surface launched stand-off weapons, survivable in both contested and communications degraded environments, will help to secure sea territory and enable forces to flow for follow-on power projection operations.

Sea control does not mean command of all the seas, all the time. Rather, it is the capability and capacity to impose localized control of the sea when and where it is required to enable other objectives and to hold it as long as necessary to accomplish those objectives. Surface forces can fulfill this crucial role, which is the necessary precondition to ensure sea lanes remain open for the free movement of goods and to safeguard the interests of the United States and partner nations.

Project National Power

Distributed Lethality provides the ability to apply all elements of seapower for deterrence, to respond to crises, aggression, or conflict, to build readiness to project power to deny or defeat aggression in multiple theaters, and to provide a robust ability to strike targets with surprise from the sea.

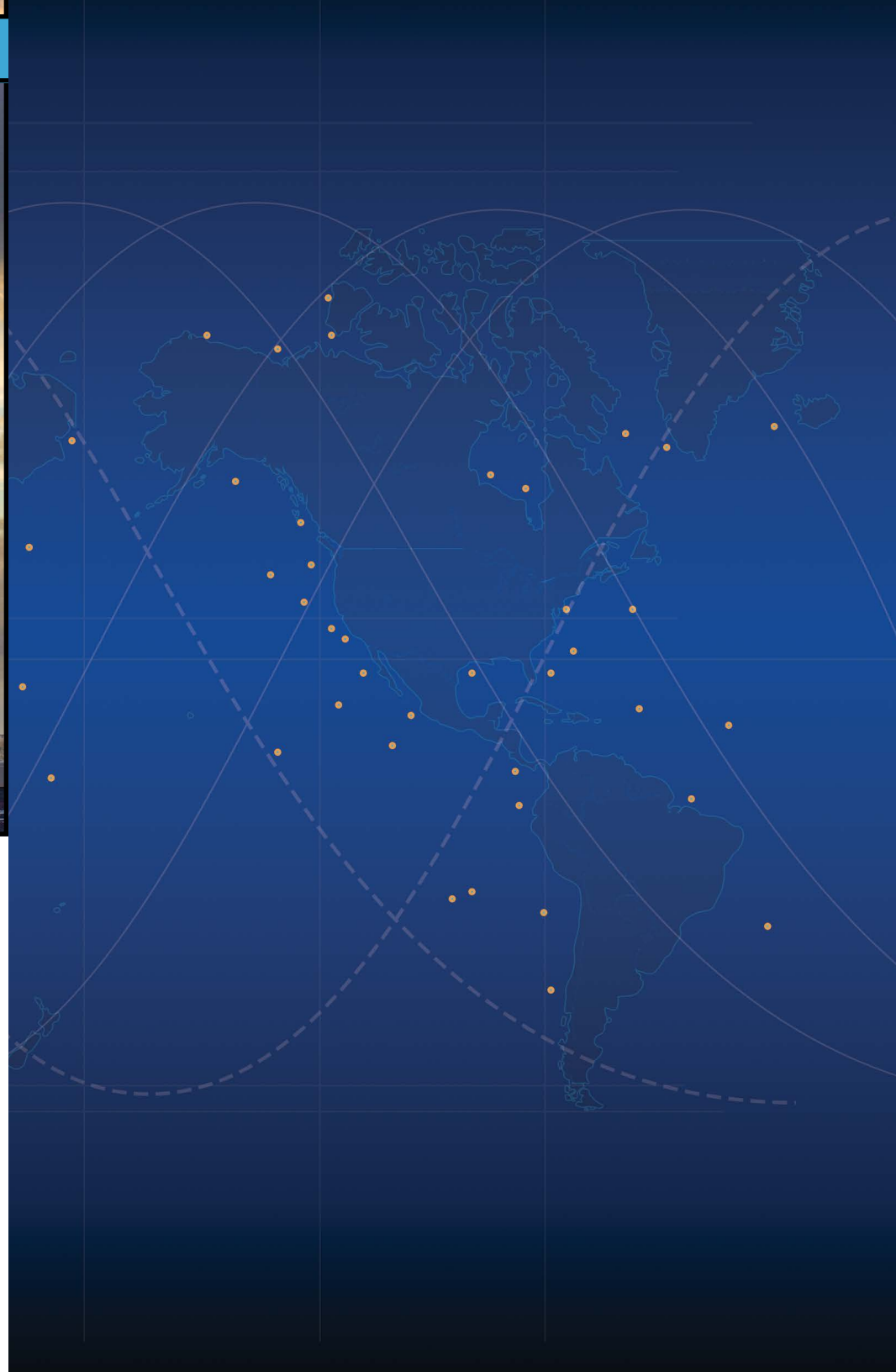


Surface forces provide our Nation with credible combat naval power at and from the sea in order to control the sea at the time and place of our choosing for the Joint Force to project power. We will do this by providing our warships with the tactics, talent, tools, and training to deceive, target and destroy enemy forces, and by instilling this warfighting ethos in the crews that fight our warships.



Distributed Lethality is changing our Fleet.

This strategy serves as our call to action to build, organize, train, and equip surface forces that can fight and win today, tomorrow, and beyond.





**IF IT FLOATS
IT FIGHTS**

